

DUBLIN GRAND OPERA SOCIETY

SPRING, 1960



FESTIVAL OF
ITALIAN OPERA

GAIETY THEATRE, DUBLIN

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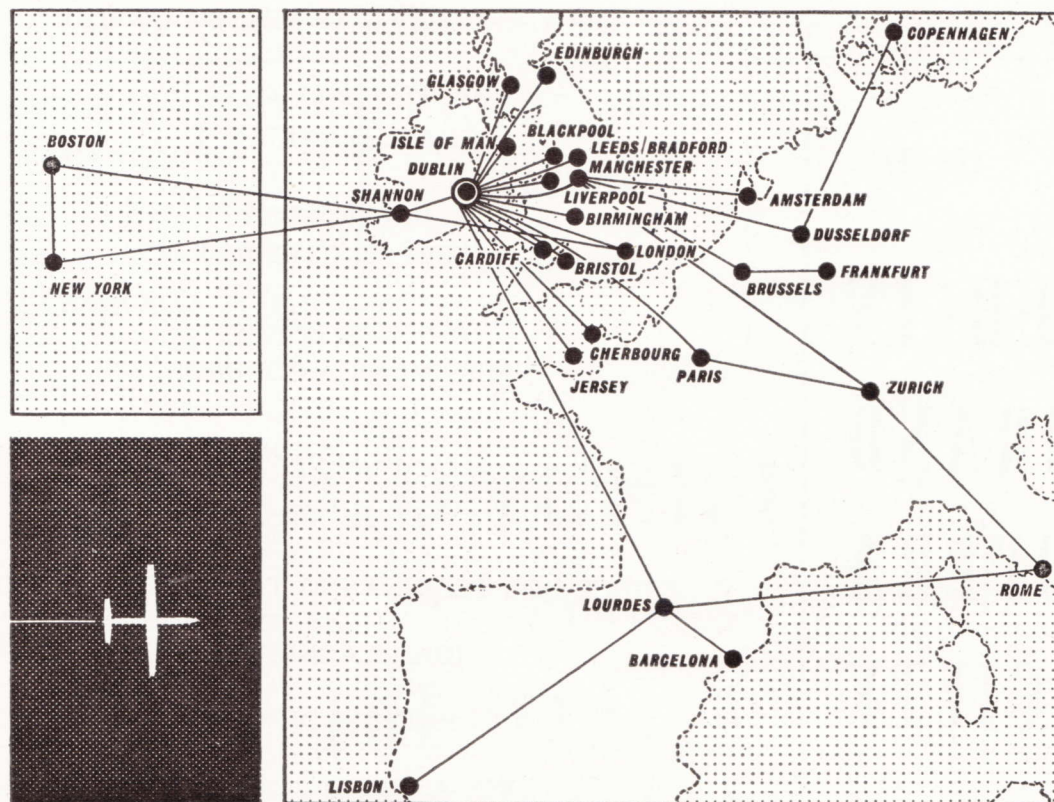
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Nell Curtin
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Aileen Edwards
Gertrude Eustace
Brida Finucane
Eveline Gibney
Phil Hamill

Margaret Hillery
Marie Kelly
Anne Kemp
Maura Keogh
Ellen Kirwan
Pauline Larkin
Maureen McDonnell
Marie McSwiney
Charlotte McMahon
Sheila McGovern
Jo Madden
Alice Moffat
Maura Mooney

Sue Maher
Fay Markey
Kay Nestor
Pauline Nolan
Teresa Nolan
Florence O'Keeffe
Dympna O'Callaghan
Finnula O'Sullivan
Noreen Ryan
Joan Rooney
Mary Troy
Kitty Vaughan
Aileen Walsh
Sylvia Whelan

GENTLEMEN

John Allen
Jos. G. Black
Philip Byrne
John Carney
Tom Carney
Hugh Cassidy
Charles Dunphy

Patk. Difney
Michael Daly
Sean Flanagan
Maurice Flynn
Richard Hanrahan
Noel Keenan
John Linehan
Eamonn Timoney

Gerard Mooney
Vincent Morrissey
Clem Morris
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Cecil Packenham
Robert Pelissier
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 Alexander Marr
 Alfonso Evangelisti
 Georg Gerike
 Dora Hall
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 Chris Kiernan
 Hans Hecker
 Sheila O'Grady
 Janos Fürst
 Wilma Leonardi
 Dario Indrigo

VIOLAS

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 Shirley Pollard
 Herbert Pöche
 Walter Hall
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THE TEATRO

"LA FENICE", VENICE . . .

In our brochure each year it is our aim to give our Patron Members and the general public some notes and articles of interest to opera-goers. Last year's brochure contained a scholarly compendium on the "Evolvement of Opera", by the distinguished writer Maestro Herbert Caesari. This year we commence a series of articles on the most famous opera houses in Italy, and we hope that our readers will find these interesting.

Everybody will appreciate that this type of Art Brochure is expensive to produce, and we ask our readers' help in publicising and selling the present issue. This help is necessary for financial reasons and also because the Brochure is a valuable medium of promoting a wider taste for opera, particularly among the younger generation.

The Dublin Grand Opera Society is proud to be the oldest cultural society of its type in Ireland, and its achievements are now recognised in most European music centres. The Society's motto is: "Give the best possible to our people in Ireland and to our visitors from abroad."

High on the façade of the Fenice Theatre and above its elegant classical portico, a stone plaque bearing the legend

SOCIETAS
MDCCXCII

records the origin of this most illustrious theatre. Most of the other great Italian opera theatres owe their origins to a reigning house, a patrician family or to the principality, but the Fenice testifies to what can be achieved through private sponsorship of music and the arts. In 1792 this Venetian "Societas" of "Patricians, Citizens and Merchants" built their theatre "ad ornamento e decoro della Dominante, atto ai nobili trattenimenti". They called it the "Fenice" (Phoenix) because, after many vicissitudes, it arose from the ashes to replace another theatre destroyed by fire. Forty-four years after it was built, the new Fenice was itself destroyed by fire and rebuilt in six months substantially as it stands to-day.

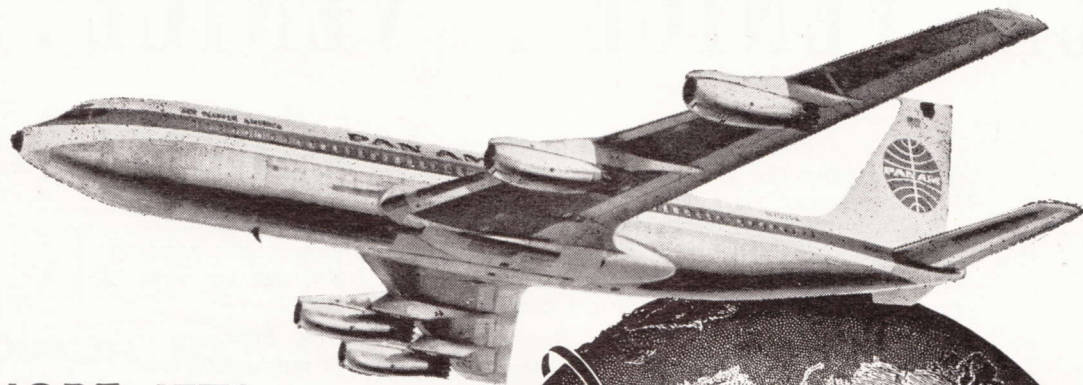
★ ★ ★

The theatre's five tiers of boxes became the property of the original members of the Society and in time passed to their heirs who for generations owned and managed their opera house to the glory



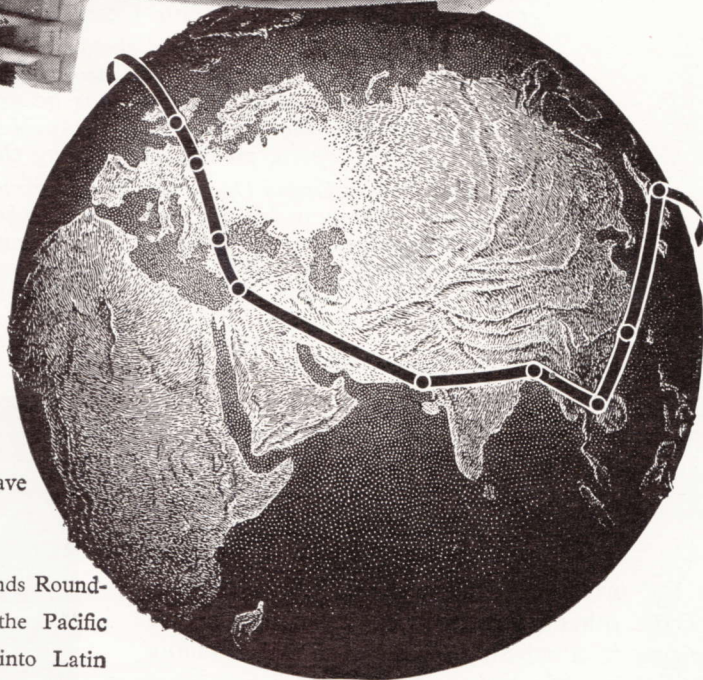
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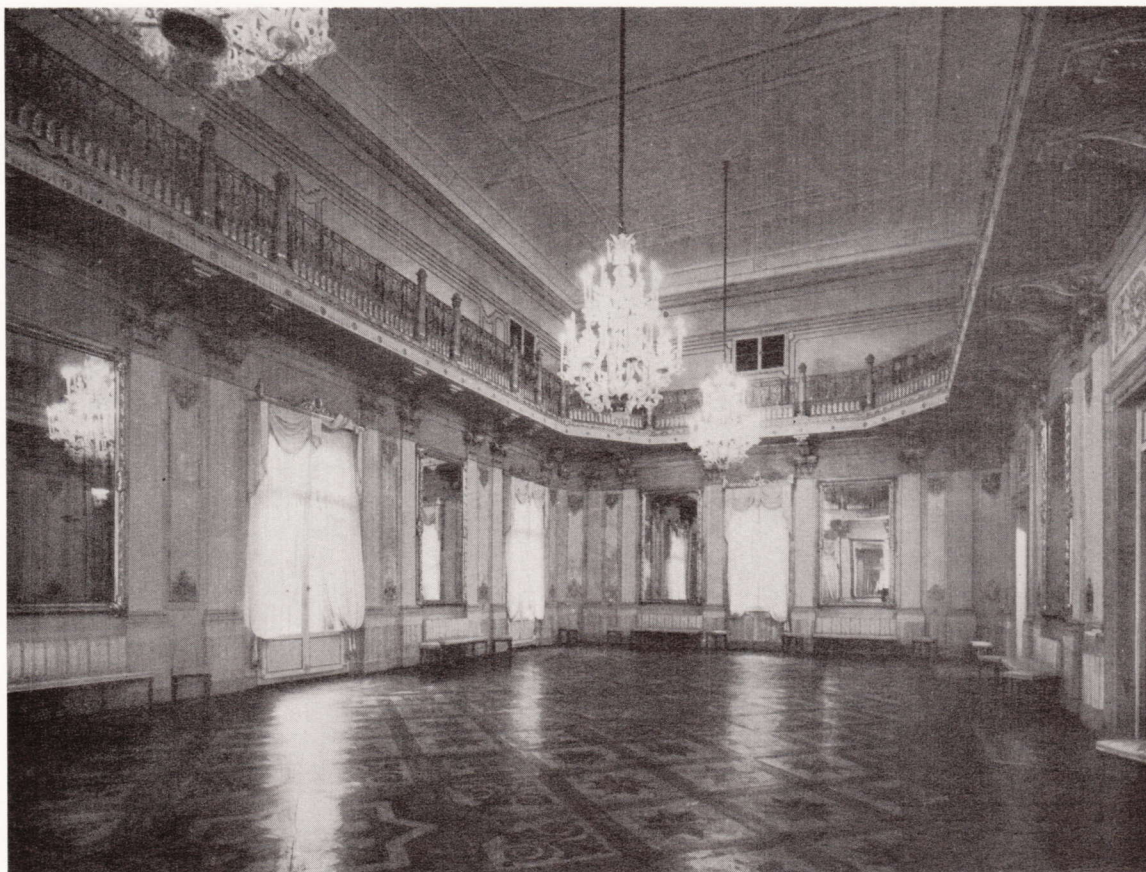
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TEATRO LA FENICE FOYER

of music and the arts. Quite a few of the boxes were still the property of the original families down to 1937. In that year the Society, finding itself unable to keep the theatre going in the changed social and economic circumstances, surrendered their theatre gratis to the newly set-up Ente Autonomo del Teatro La Fenice. This statutory body, subsidised by the State, the Municipality and the City Tourist organisations, has since conducted the Fenice opera house in a manner worthy of its long traditions and its place as one of Italy's leading theatres.

★ ★ ★

Unlike any other theatre in the world you may approach the Fenice only on foot or, if you can afford the luxury, by gondola, in which case your gondolier will disembark you on the very steps of its floodlit portico. Straightaway you enter one of the loveliest theatres on earth, with its midnight blue curtain, its tiers of boxes encrusted with filigrees of gilt "putti"

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★ ★ ★

Interwoven with the history of the Fenice are the names of Paisiello, Rossini, Donizetti and Bellini who composed operas for it. For the Fenice too Verdi wrote his "Ernani", "Attila", "Rigoletto", "La Traviata" and "Simon Boccanegra" all of which were performed there for the first time.

The Fenice usually provides two seasons of opera each year. The main season commences traditionally on St. Stephen's night and lasts for eight or nine weeks. This year the works scheduled were Verdi's "Battle of Legnano" and "Masked Ball", Rossini's "Turco in Italia", Handel's "Alcina", Pizzetti's "Murder in the Cathedral", Mussorgski's "Kovancina", two operas of Ravel and several ballets.

LOVERS

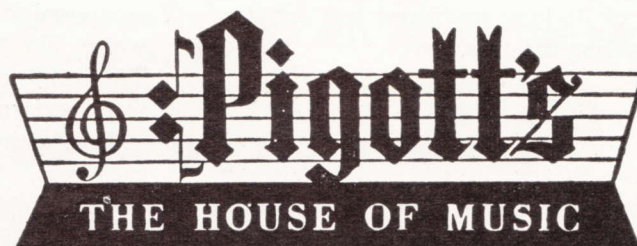
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A shorter summer season usually follows, running from mid-May to mid-June. Opera lovers fortunate enough to be in Venice during that period in 1960 may hear Verdi's "Forza del Destino" and "Nabucco" as well as Puccini's "Turandot" (with Lucille Udovick and Franco Corelli).

★ ★ ★

Although the Fenice is nowadays the only Venetian theatre wholly devoted to opera and music, it may be of interest to recall that the city in the distant past was the richest in Italy in the number of its opera theatres. In the seventeenth century there were no fewer than sixteen. The "San Cassiano", probably

the first public opera house in the world, was owned by the patrician Tron family, who allowed the public free access to its spectacles. No trace of this theatre now remains.

★ ★ ★

In the ancient "San Moise", likewise defunct, the earliest Rossini operas were first performed. Yet another, the "Goldoni", still standing but closed, began life as the "San Salvatore" in 1661. Among the survivors is the "Malibran" where the young Toscanini conducted but which is now a cinema. The same fate has overtaken the Teatro San Benedetto (1755) successively named "Venier" and now the "Cinema Rossini."



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RADIO EIREANN

Sixth Festival of Italian Opera

18th APRIL to 14th MAY, 1960

FALSTAFF

(Verdi)

TOSCA

(Puccini)

TURANDOT

(Puccini)

LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR

(Donizetti)

LA SONNAMBULA

(Bellini)

LA TRAVIATA

(Verdi)

INTERPRETERS :

Aureliana Beltrami, Gianna D'Angelo, Rina Corsi, Nora de Rosa, Myriam Pirazzini, Margherita Rinaldi, Lucille Udovick, Nicoletta Verzieri, Virginia Zeani; Ruggero Bondino, Ezio Boschi, Umberto Borso, Anselmo Colzani, Loris Gambelli, Piero Guelfi, Arturo La Porta, Melchiorre Luise, Valiano Natali, Felice Schiavi, Enzo Sordello.

CONDUCTORS :

FRANCO PATANÈ

OTTAVIO ZIINO

PRODUCER :

BRUNO NOFRI

CHORUS MASTERS :

WILLIAM RICHARDS

ANGELO PECCHIAI

CHORUS OF DUBLIN GRAND OPERA SOCIETY

RADIO EIREANN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

OFFICIAL OPENING NIGHT — EASTER MONDAY, 18th APRIL, 1960.

GALA NIGHT — WEDNESDAY, 20th APRIL, 1960.

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Festival Conductors

MAESTRO FRANCO PATANÈ

Franco Patanè, who is making a welcome return for the Italian Opera Festival of 1960, was born in Sicily 51 years ago. He studied at the San Pietro a Majella Conservatory of Naples, graduating in instrumentation, organ and pianoforte and later, in 1929, in composition. In the same year he was appointed an assistant conductor at the Teatro San Carlo and subsequently for the term of no less than fifteen years, between 1940 and 1955, he was permanent musical director of that great Theatre. His reputation is now world-wide, as he has directed opera in almost every other opera house of note in Italy as well as in other European countries—in Rome, Palermo, Genoa, Milan, Bologna and Turin; London (Covent Garden), Sofia, Paris, Nice, Madrid, Seville, etc., etc., in Cairo and Alexandria in North Africa, and in Johannesburg and Cape Town in South Africa.

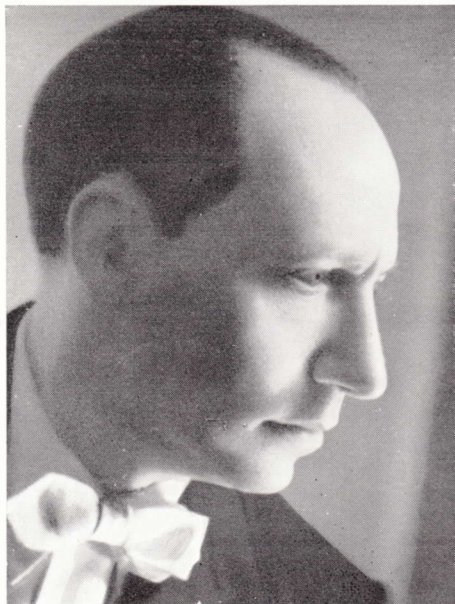
Maestro Patanè's activities have not been limited to opera: he has achieved success as an orchestral conductor with such famous orchestras as the Santa Cecilia in Rome, the Radio Orchestras of Rome, Turin and Milan and the Scarlatti of Naples, the London Symphony, the Tonhalle of Zürich and orchestras in Spain, France and South Africa.

Maestro Patanè conducted opera for the D.G.O.S. in their Winter Season, 1958, and the Italian Festivals of 1957 and 1959. When the Society was meeting difficulties in arranging the Winter Season of 1959, Maestro Patanè, at the Society's request, assembled brilliant casts for the Italian performances of "Fedora" and "Il Trovatore" which he also conducted.



MAESTRO OTTAVIO ZIINO

(Composer and Conductor). He studied composition with Antonio Savasta at the Conservatoire of Palermo, his native town. At the same time he studied law at the University of Palermo. After this he followed courses in conducting and composition at the S. Cecilia Academy in Rome under Bernardino Molinari, and Ildebrando Pizzetti. He then dedicated himself to conducting, both in the theatrical field (Rome Opera House, San Carlo, Naples, Carlo Felice Theatre, Genoa, Reggio Theatre, Parma, Bellini Theatre, Catania, Grande Theatre, Brescia, Massimo Theatre in Cagliari etc.) and in the symphonic field as well, conducting concerts in the most important institutes of Italy (National Academy of S. Cecilia in Rome, Maggio Musicale, Florence, Società Scarlatti, Naples, Festival, Venice, RAI-Radio Italiana, Massimo Palermo). He has been active abroad in both operatic and symphonic fields (France, S. America, Germany, Scandinavia, Turkey, Yugoslavia, Holland, Australia and Luxembourg). He is now the resident Director of the Symphonic Orchestra of Sicily. He has recently proved himself as a composer also.





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CARDENIO BOTTI

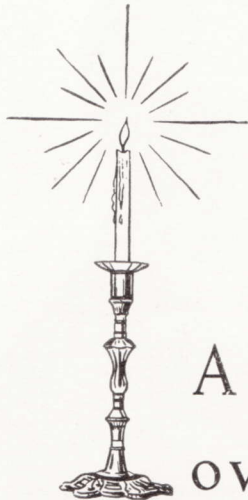
(Manager). Maestro Botti's many activities, conductor, composer and man of theatre, are well known in Italy where he has supervised the direction of many of the principal opera houses. He completed his studies at the St. Cecilia Conservatoire in Rome. At the Royal Opera House in Malta he was first conductor for the operas and symphony concerts, and subsequently General Manager. He conducted the St. Cecilia Orchestra in Rome at various concerts in the well known Augusteo Hall. He was subsequently appointed Director of the Teatro Massimo in Palermo and later of the Carlo Felice in Genoa. He has been an adjudicator at numerous contests for singers and composers and has been Director of the Organisation for the co-ordination of the great Opera Houses, controlled by the State. For nine years he has organised the visiting Italian Opera Company for the D.G.O.S. and the benefit of his long experience has considerably aided the success of the Italian Opera Festivals in Dublin.



PAOLO SILVERI



Paolo Silveri was born in Ofena, a small town in the province of Aquila d'Abruzzo. He studied at a college of Dominican friars in Arezzo, and with them learned to appreciate the first principles of music. When he arrived in Rome (he was 18 years of age and had already ventured upon various trades which enabled him to continue to dedicate himself to music) he began his study of singing. He was a pupil at S. Cecilia, where, however, his voice was classified as "bass" and as such he won the scholarship to the Teatro dell'Opera, Rome, where he sang for five years, still a bass, alternating his artistic life with long periods of time spent in the army. In 1943, when the right occasion came, he made a brilliant début at the Teatro dell'Opera, as Germont in *Traviata*, in January, 1944. From that day on the doors of the most important opera houses in the world were open to him, and Silveri had sung everywhere, La Scala, Milan, the Metropolitan, New York, Covent Garden, London, the Opera, Paris, the Gaiety, Dublin, the Municipal, Rio de Janeiro, the Municipal, Caracas, and at the festivals at Edinburgh, Zürich, Wiesbaden, Stuttgart, Lausanne, etc. In Dublin on 30th May, 1956, after singing *Rigoletto*, which closed the official season, Silveri announced to the public that he was retiring from the stage to take on a new self-imposed course of study.



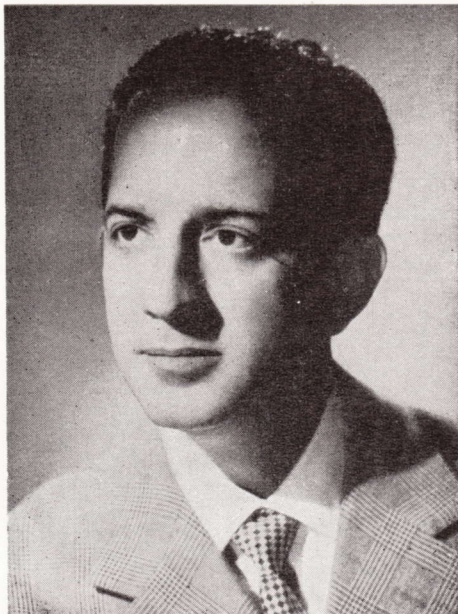
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Producer . . .

BRUNO NOFRI

Born in 1908 in Milan, Italy. After graduating from high school, he studied chiefly music at the Academy of Drama. From 1927 to 1930 he worked for La Scala, Milan, as an assistant to producer Caramba. From 1931 to 1938 he was with the Teatro Reale dell'Opera, Rome, as an assistant producer to A. Sanine, L. Wallerstein and H. Graf. In 1938 he started his career as producer of Opera and since then he has produced more than 160 operas at the major houses not only in Italy but also in Germany, Belgium, Ireland (Festival of Italian Opera in Dublin), Egypt, England, Lebanon, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, Japan, North and South American countries.

Stage Set Designer . . .



CAMILLO PARRAVICINI

Son of Angelo Parravicini, the designer who worked for many years at La Scala, Milan, Camillo Parravicini was born in Milan in 1903, and after studying at the Accademia di Brera he became a pupil of his father and worked with him. Since 1926 he has been living in Rome where he has his own studio. Besides the Opera House in Rome, he has designed settings for some of the most important theatres in the world. For the Dublin Grand Opera Society he has provided many settings, among which we may number *Masked Ball*, *Aida*, *Andrea Chenier*, *Lucia di Lammermoor* and *Manon Lescaut*, and those for the 1960 Festival.

<i>Lighting Effects</i>	-	-	-	<i>Harry Morrison</i>
<i>Stage Manager</i>	-	-	-	<i>Tom Jones</i>



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AURELIANA BELTRAMI

(Soprano). Studied in Milan and having won some singing competitions made her début at a very early age showing herself to be an artist of exceptional talent. Her career advanced rapidly, taking her very soon to the Scala, Milan, and to the principal Italian and foreign theatres.



RINA CORSI

(Mezzo soprano). Born and studied in Florence. Her career is made up of successes, having sung in all the principal Italian theatres, including La Scala, Opera House Rome, S. Carlo, Naples, Massimo theatre, Palermo, and also abroad.

GIANNA D'ANGELO

(Coloratura Soprano). Although still practically a débutante on the operatic stage when she made her first appearance in Dublin as Gilda and Lucia five years ago, few singers in our time have made such an immediate impact on Dublin audiences as Gianna D'Angelo did then. Less than a year previously she had made her opera début in Rome for which she had been prepared by her teacher, the great Toti Dal Monte. Since then D'Angelo has scaled the heights and is now sought after by all the leading opera houses in Europe and America for the coloratura repertoire. Recently she has been singing in the opera seasons at Barcelona, Lisbon, Oslo, Copenhagen, Lausanne, Naples, Turin, Palermo, etc., as well as in America, North and South. The Dublin Grand Opera Society is very happy to secure her return in two of her outstanding rôles, Amina in "La Sonnambula" and in "Lucia".



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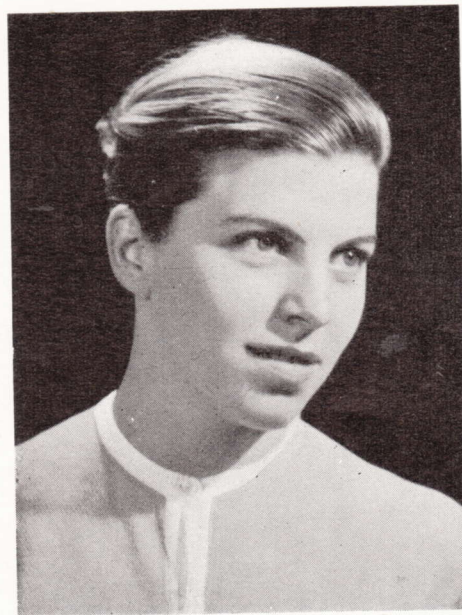


MYRIAM PIRAZZINI

(Mezzo soprano). An artist of international renown. She has sung at La Scala, Milan, in Rome, at the San Carlo, Naples, and in all the principal Italian and foreign theatres. She frequently takes part in the concerts of the Accademia Nazionale di S. Cecilia, and the Radio TV in Italy, and she has made several records.

MARGHERITA RINALDI

(Soprano). Studied in Milan and perfected her style at the school of the famous artist Ines Adami Corradetti. Was discovered at the Spoleto competition where she won first prize. In the Teatro Sperimentale there, which is under the same direction as the Opera of Rome, she made her début in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, obtaining great praise from public and press. She was immediately called to La Scala.



NORA DE ROSA

(Lyric Soprano) achieved such great success with Dublin audiences last December in the title rôle of Giordano's "Fedora" as to secure her return in the 1960 Festival as Alice in "Falstaff" and as Floria Tosca. In the interval Mme. de Rosa has been singing at the Scala and has made a tour of Belgium singing during the seasons at Ghent and Liège. On account of her great musicianship and acting ability she is much in demand, especially at the Scala, for the modern repertoire.

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LUCILLE UDOVICK

(Soprano). Born and educated in America, she has perfected her art in Italy where she has resided for several years. She is listed among the best singers of Italian opera and is world famous, singing in the leading Italian theatres, including La Scala, and in the most important musical centres of Europe.

NICOLETTA VERZIERI

(Soprano). Has studied in Rome and, before making her début, won several singing competitions. She quickly showed herself an artist of intelligence and versatility and to-day performs in the principal Italian theatres.



VIRGINIA ZEANI

(Soprano) studied first in Rumania, where she was born, and then in Italy where she still lives and which she considers her country of adoption. Three years ago she married the famous bass Nicola Rossi Lemeni. Her career has been one of continual and rapid ascent to stardom. She has sung at the Opera House of Rome, La Scala, at the Comunale of Florence, and in all the large Italian opera houses. She has also appeared in France, England, Austria, Spain, Egypt, South Africa, and many times at the Italian Opera Festival in Dublin. A sensitive and versatile artist, she interprets operas of Verdi, Donizetti, Mozart and Puccini, and has a vast repertoire in six languages.



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As conductor and composer Gustav Mahler was a genius. Completely entranced by the intrinsic conception of a work of art his control over an orchestra was almost hypnotic. He shared the moods and feelings of the music's characters: with Wotan he was enraged at the disloyalty of Brunhilde, with Alberich he suffered the despair of having been robbed of the Ring.

Mahler's rich imagination, ardent enthusiasm and his deep inner feelings that expressed themselves freely, regardless of the possibility of execution and popular success, have marked him as one of the outstanding post-Beethoven Symphonists.

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RUGGERO BONDINO

(Tenor). Born in Udine in December, 1930. Winner of the competition held by the Milan Lyrical and Concert Society in July, 1957, he made his début in *Bohème* at the Teatro Nuovo in Milan.

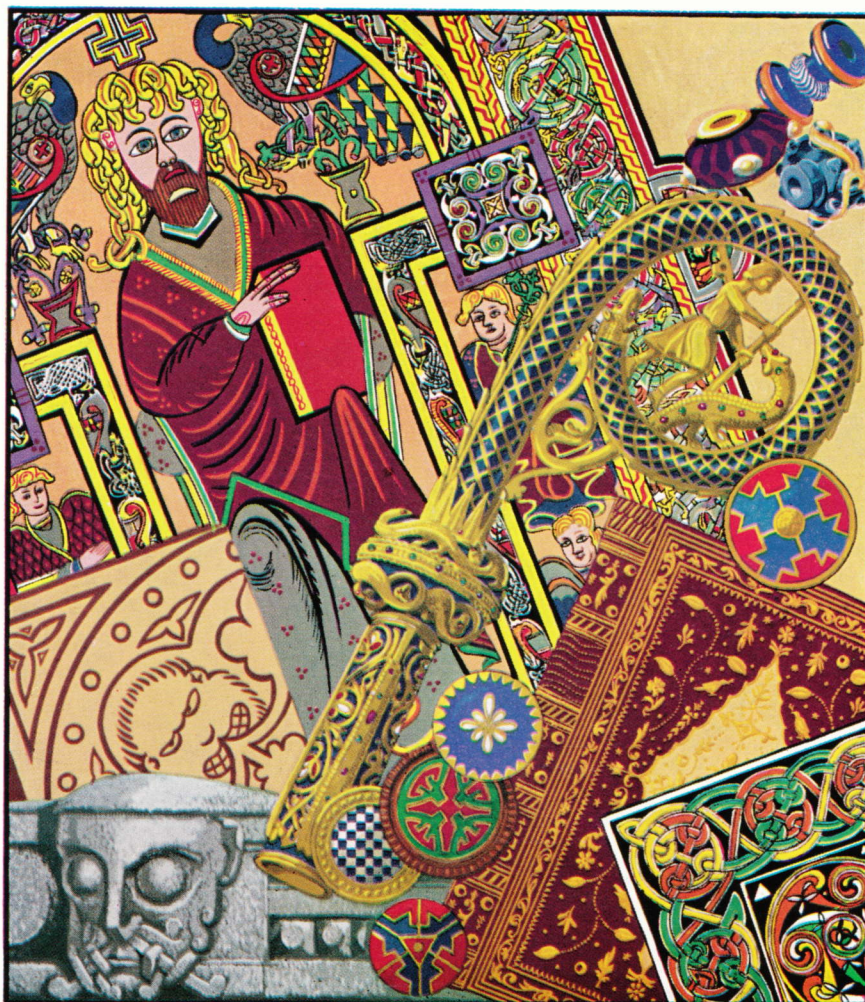
After his début many important contracts followed immediately. He has sung in many Italian opera centres as well as in Spain, France, Belgium, Switzerland, England, Luxembourg and Germany.



UMBERTO BORSO

(Tenor). Made his début at the Teatro Sperimentale of Spoleto in *La Forza del Destino* which his voice, dramatic, full and generous, was immediately judged most favourably by both the public and the national press. The most authoritative critics predicted a brilliant career for him. Indeed, he soon passed to L'Opera, Rome, then to La Fenice, Venice, to the Verdi, Trieste, the Massimo, Palermo, and to all the best-known Italian opera houses. He took part in an opera tournée in Australia and New Zealand, and in opera festivals in Egypt, Japan, Spain, and Holland. His most recent appearances have been in Naples, Caracalla, Arena di Verona and Barcelona (where he partnered Renata Tebaldi). This is his sixth visit to Dublin.





TOP LEFT : A specimen of Irish Illumination—Portrait of St. Mark or St. Luke, "Book of Kells." TOP RIGHT: Examples of pre-historic Glass Beads found in Ireland. CENTRE : Crozier of Cormac Mac Carthy, King-Bishop of Cashel, who died in A.D. 1138, found in a stone tomb in an outside recess at Cormac's Chapel, Rock of Cashel. CENTRE LEFT : Encaustic pavement tile, examples of which are to be found in many abbeys and churches, such as, Mellifont, Kilkenny, Kells, Kildare and Dublin. CENTRE RIGHT : An example of Irish bookbinding. Dublin 1779 (Victoria and Albert Museum, London). Above it, one of the enamelled bosses on the Ardagh Chalice. LOWER RIGHT : Portion of the Frontispiece of the "Epistle of Jerome" in the "Book of Durrow." LOWER LEFT : Sculpture on the Round Tower at Devenish Island, Lough Erne. LOWER CENTRE : Four examples of enamelling. From top : an enamelled boss on the "Shrine of St. Patrick's Bell," an enamelled button, early Christian period, an enamelled boss on the "Moylough Belt" and one of the enamelled bosses on the "Tara Brooch."

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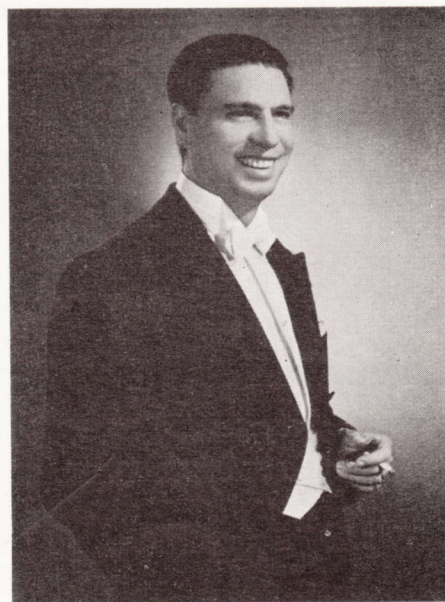
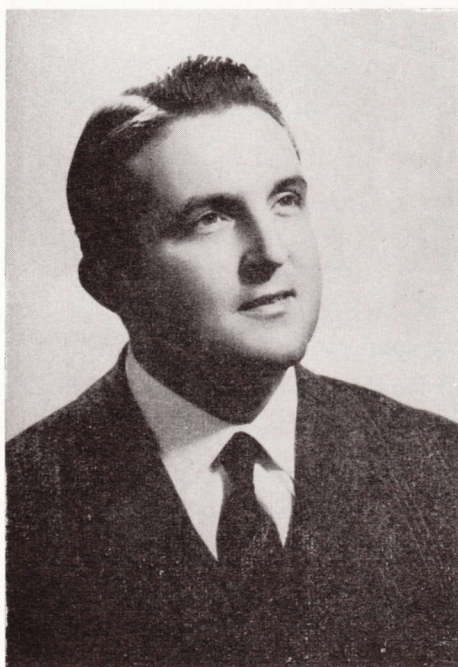
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PIERO GUELFİ

(Baritone). Born in Genoa where he completed his musical studies, he then went to Milan, where he has now been living for a number of years during which he has sung in operas in La Scala. Piero Guelfi is well known and appreciated in the principal theatres of Italy, Europe and America. He has a vast repertoire which includes works from Verdi to Puccini and from Giordano to Zandonai. He is renowned for his "Falstaff" which he interprets with the true spirit of Verdi and Shakespeare.



ANGELO MARCHIANDI

(Tenor). Born and studied in Genoa. Made his début at the Experimental Theatre, Spoleto, revealing himself an artist with a rich voice and refined style. He soon appeared at the Rome Opera House and the San Carlo of Naples, Copenhagen and some French theatres.

FERRUCCIO MAZZOLI

(Bass) completed his musical studies at the Bologna Conservatoire and subsequently appeared at the Teatro Sperimentale in Spoleto, where he was immediately noticed for his exceptional voice. After his appearance in this theatre it was not difficult for him to obtain engagements at the principal opera houses, from the Rome Opera House to St. Carlo in Naples, the Massimo in Palermo, the Comunale in Bologna, and La Scala. He appeared in Dublin for the first time three years ago, singing in various operas, and was immediately acclaimed by the public. He is especially remembered for his performances in *Aïda* and *The Barber of Seville*, and this year he has been chosen to sing several different rôles.





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MAESTRO ANGELO PECCHAI

He studied piano with the concert pianist Prof. Pia Damerini-Bissi, Composition and Choral Direction with Maestro Adone Zecchi, gaining his degree at the Conservatoire G.B. Martini of Bologna. As a choral Director his activities have taken him to many theatres and to the Italian Radio, and he has won the International Guido Monaco competition of Arezzo. He has been Chorus Master in important Italian theatres. At present he is teaching singing and directs the Chorus of the Tito Schipa Academy in Rome.

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Since coming to Dublin 4½ years ago, he has produced a number of plays for the St. James's Gate Drama Group and has conducted one of the musical shows in the Rupert Guinness Hall.



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GIUSEPPE VERDI, 1813 - 1901

The three operas of Verdi's last and greatest period were "Aïda," "Otello" and "Falstaff". The Dublin Grand Opera Society presented "Aïda" in 1958, "Otello" in 1959 and now for the first time offers "Falstaff," Verdi's only comic opera.

All his life Verdi was an ardent admirer and student of William Shakespeare. "Shakespeare was one of the poets of my predilection since my earliest youth. I read and re-read him continuously," he wrote. He had already founded operas on "Macbeth" and "Othello" and over the years had returned again and again to the idea of a comic opera based on the "Merry Wives of Windsor". But nothing came of it until his fortunate association with Arrigo Boïto, the distinguished composer and man of letters. Boïto had provided Verdi with the libretto for "Otello" and finally persuaded him to start work on "Falstaff." Late in 1890 (three years after "Otello") the composition of "Falstaff" began. Verdi was then 77. In less than three years the opera had its first performance at the Scala, Milan, on 9th February, 1893.

What emerged from Verdi's labour of some two-and-a-half years was the comic opera he had always wanted to write as well as the masterpiece of his long life. It is indeed a masterpiece by any standards and remarkable if only for the fact that it was a complete break with nearly everything Verdi had done before. Gone were the conventional *pezzi chiusi*—the conventional arias, duets and concerted numbers—of the early and middle periods. The new style reveals instead a perfect fusion of words, action and music. The orchestral writing has a richness and variety not hitherto found in Verdi, pointing, illustrating and commenting upon characters and situations as it moves fleetly along. Inspiration never flags in this marvellous, effervescent score from the moment the curtain rises without an overture.

Boïto's libretto is a synthesis of the Falstaff episodes in "The Merry Wives of Windsor" and "Henry IV".

The action takes place in Windsor in the reign of Henry IV.

ACT I

Scene I

The curtain rises to reveal Sir John Falstaff (barytone) seated in his great armchair in the Garter Inn. He has dined enormously and consumed five bottles of sherry. He is now calling for another and pays small attention to the complaints of Dr. Caius (tenor) of having been beaten and robbed last night by Sir John himself and his two ruffianly servants, Pistol (bass) and Bardolph (tenor). Sir John reproves the pair only for having bungled the job and is more concerned with the circumstances that, as usual, he is short of cash and cannot pay for the immense supper just eaten. But he has a plan to raise the wind. He has, he tells the pair, noted certain admiring glances from Mistress Alice Ford and Mistress Meg Page, wives of wealthy burghers of the town. These good ladies hold their husbands' purse strings and perhaps by laying siege to the ladies he may gain access to the purses. Already he has written identical letters to each proposing an assignation.

When bidden to deliver these letters, Pistol and Bardolph huffily decline—considering such a mission to compromise their "honour". Falstaff despatches a page with the letters. Turning to the two ruffians he instructs them in the nature of this "honour" (the "Honour Monologue"). In truth, it cannot fill a man's belly, set a broken shin, mend a foot or even restore a hair. What then is it? Only a word that flies away in the wind. His satirical discourse concluded, the Knight seizes a broom and chases the pair from his presence.

Scene II

Outside her house Alice Ford (soprano) and Meg Page (mezzo-soprano) compare the letters they have received. Mistress Quickly (mezzo-soprano) and Alice's daughter Anne (soprano)—Nannetta in the opera—are admitted to the secret. Amidst great chattering and excitement all agree that this impudent "winebag," this "mountain of lard" must be taught

a lesson. Quickly is commissioned to bear a letter to the Knight in which Alice Ford confesses her passion for him and accepts the assignation.

Meanwhile Pistol and Bardolph in revenge for their dismissal tell Ford of their late master's amorous-financial designs on his wife. If he is not watchful he will be cuckolded. Ford, a very jealous husband, resolves to probe their story further by introducing himself in disguise to Falstaff.

A charming lyrical interlude throughout the Scene is the love-making of Nannetta and Fenton (tenor) who take advantage of all the noise and commotion to exchange kisses. They must be circumspect, however, as Ford intends to marry Nannetta off to the elderly and ridiculous Dr. Caius. The hilarious Scene ends with the despatch of Mistress Quickly on her errand.

★ ★ ★

ACT II

Scene I

We are back at the Garter Inn. Quickly's interview with Falstaff is one of the most amusing episodes in this opera. Approaching the Knight with deep obeisances (*Reverenza . . . !*) she explains that she is there on behalf of Mistress Alice Ford who, poor lady (*Povera donna !*), sighs and sickens for love of Sir John and would gladly receive him between the hours of two and three (N.B. the often repeated *Dalle due alle tre*) when her husband, Ford, is always absent. The meeting is arranged and Quickly leaves Falstaff to preen himself that he is still a charmer.

Now arrives Signor Fontana (Shakespeare's Mr. Brook). It is Ford in disguise. He begs Sir John, whom all know to be so irresistible in love, to "lay amiable siege" on his behalf to Mistress Alice Ford with whom he (Fontana) is madly in love. In anticipation he presents the Knight with the more than acceptable gifts of a demi-john of Cyprian wine and a purse of gold. Falstaff is able to inform his visitor that he has an assignation with the lady that very afternoon. Falstaff retires "to make himself beautiful" for the tryst. Ford, believing the worst, indulges in a fit of hysterical rage and jealousy in the violent "Jealousy Monologue"—*E sogno o realta?*

★ ★ ★

ACT II

Scene II

In Ford's house Mistress Quickly reports to her
Forty

excited cronies on her visit to Sir John. Their chattering is halted when Nannetta bursts into tears about the cruelty of her father in forcing her into marriage with the foolish Dr. Caius. Her mother and the others assure her they will circumvent the marriage. Servants bring in a vast laundry basket and Alice bids them be ready to throw it out the window later at a sign from her.

Falstaff arrives. During his wooing of Alice there occurs the incomparable vocal gem of the opera, the fleeting lines *Quand' ero paggio*, where Sir John assures her that he was not always fat. Indeed, when page to the Duke of Norfolk he was "as supple and slight as to slip through a ring." As Falstaff makes more violent love Quickly rushes in, as pre-arranged, to warn Alice that Ford has come home unexpectedly. Meg follows soon in a genuine panic shouting that Ford has returned in earnest and in a very bad temper. As Ford, followed by Pistol, Bardolph, Caius and a crowd of friends and relations swarm in, Falstaff retires behind a screen. There he remains undiscovered. When the search party moves upstairs he is unceremoniously bundled, thoroughly frightened, into the great laundry basket and covered with the dirty linen. Nannetta and Fenton retire behind Falstaff's screen. Their whispering is heard by Ford who thinks he has caught his wife and her lover *in flagrante*. Finding instead his daughter and Fenton, Ford is further enraged by this new treachery. The pursuit continues. As soon as the coast is clear, Alice orders the servants to tip the washing basket and its tenant out the window and into the Thames below. The Merry Wives beckon Ford to the window to enjoy the spectacle.

★ ★ ★

ACT III

Scene I

Outside the Garter Inn, Falstaff broods on his recent humiliation—"To be thrown in a basket of dirty linen into the river to drown like a kitten or a blind pup and to be saved only by the buoyancy of my own great paunch! 'Tis a thieving, wicked world, this modern world," he moralises. "No honour left!" As mulled claret is helping to revive his spirits and subdue all the Thames water he has swallowed, he is startled by the voice of Mistress Quickly in a booming *Reverenza*. Mistress Alice, she tells him, was no party to his misfortunes and still longs for an assignation. He should come to Herne's haunted oak at midnight disguised as the phantom

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Greydrake lays her eggs and drifts downstream as a SPENT GNAT (8). The speckled RAINBOW TROUT (9) often feeds on MINNOWS (10), which are also captured by the KINGFISHER (11). Limestone rivers also contain weeds like the bright green WATER CROWFOOT (12) with small vivid white flowers. Notice, too, the STONEFLY (13), whose larva is the CREEPER (14), and the fearsome




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Black Huntsman wearing antlers on his head. Sir John falls again into the trap. Mistress Ford explains her elaborate hoax to her husband. All are to meet at Herne's Oak that night dressed as fairies, witches and goblins. Dr. Caius is again promised Nannetta's hand by Ford who will pronounce them man and wife at to-night's revels. Quickly runs off to warn the lovers.

★ ★ ★

ACT III

Scene II

Herne's Oak in Windsor Great Park at midnight. The Masque of the wedding of the Queen of the Fairies, which Alice has arranged as part of the further punishment of Falstaff, is about to begin. Fenton sings his *Romanza* to which Nannetta joins an exquisite refrain. Alice gives her final instructions. There will be two "bridal pairs" — the Fairy Queen (Nannetta) and Oberon (Fenton) and a second masked couple. Falstaff arrives followed as midnight strikes by Alice. Before Falstaff's courtship has advanced very far Meg calls out that the goblins are

coming. Alice rushes off leaving a very scared Knight hoping to become invisible by throwing himself face downwards on the ground as the Fairy Queen and her attendants appear. After Nannetta's ethereal "Fairy Song — *Sul fil d'un soffio etesio* — Falstaff is discovered by the mob of goblins, sprites and witches who proceed to pinch, prod and belabour him mercilessly. At length, however, Falstaff, with a great bellow, recognises Bardolph among his tormentors and the spell is broken. Taking the joke well he begins to see that he has been an ass but turns the tables a little by pointing out that without himself and his sense of humour the joke would have lost much of its savour.

The revels continue with the Masque. Ford officiates, believing one of the bridal pairs to be Dr. Caius and his daughter. The Merry Wives, however, have been doing some switching and when the couples unveil Caius finds that his "bride" is Bardolph while Fenton is paired with Nannetta. It is now Ford's turn to accept a situation gracefully and this he does. Falstaff calls for a chorus to wind up the evening and the frolic of "Falstaff" ends in the brilliant fugue:—

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LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR

GAETANO DONIZETTI 1797-1848

(Libretto by Cammarano, based on Scott's "Bride of Lammermoor." First produced in Naples in 1835.

The setting is in Scotland about 1700.)

ACT I

Scene I is a grove near the Castle of Lammermoor. Henry Ashton (Baritone), Lucy's brother, and his followers are searching for the intruder who is believed to be Lucy's unknown lover. Henry must remove all obstacles to his scheme of forcing Lucy into marriage with Lord Arthur Bucklaw through which he hopes to restore the family fortunes that were shattered in the political perils of the time. Lucy is ignorant of this scheme. Norman (Tenor) reports that the stranger is none other than Edgar, last of the Ravenswoods, between whose House and Henry's a blood feud has existed for generations. In the air *La pietade in suo favore* Henry vows to quench this secret love in Edgar's blood.

Scene II is the Castle park. The moonlit scene and the gentle character of Lucy herself are established by the tranquil harmonies of the solo harp to which the curtain rises. Lucy (Soprano) enters and to her companion Alice describes in the aria *Regnava nel silenzio* her meetings with Edgar at this spot. The mood of the aria is dreamy and ecstatic but some of its passages demand extreme technical brilliance. Edgar (Tenor) finally appears. He has to tell her that he must go on a distant journey but that before leaving he would wish to be reconciled with Henry

as a prelude to their marriage. Lucy, however, knowing too well the harshness of her brother's nature, counsels him to keep their love still a secret. The exciting duet concludes with an exchange of rings in pledge of betrothal.

★ ★ ★

ACT II

Henry has sent for Lucy in furtherance of his plan to break down her resistance to the marriage he has, in fact, already arranged. Lucy sadly protests. Henry has intercepted all Edgar's letters but now he hands her one, a forgery, which persuades her that she has been deserted by Edgar for another woman. This duet (*Soffriva nel pianto*) is moving and dramatic as Henry bullyingly urges the bewildered Lucy to forget the faithless Edgar and marry Arthur. As well as saving their House from ruin she may also, he suggests, save him (Henry) from the political dangers that threaten his life. Lucy appeals to Raymond (Bass), the family chaplain. Only when he urges her to obey does Lucy broken-heartedly submit.

In the second Castle scene of this Act the opera moves towards its climax. Guests, tenants, etc., have gathered to witness the signing of the marriage contract. After the lively chorus the bridegroom (Tenor) is received. Lucy enters, seemingly frozen in her sorrow. Henry explains to Arthur that she still

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grieves for her mother only recently dead. In haste he presents the document to Lucy and in terror and confusion of mind she signs it. At that moment Edgar, returned from his mission, dramatically bursts in upon the scene. Shocked by what he conceives must be Lucy's treachery he reviles the fainting girl. Tension heightens into the exciting sextet led by Edgar *Chi mi frena in tal momento?*—one of the greatest concerted pieces in Italian opera. In the quarrel which ensues Raymond interposes to prevent a duel. Edgar, departing, flings Lucy's ring at her feet. There is a thrilling choral ending to the Act with Lucy's voice soaring despairingly over the rest.



ACT III

The marriage has taken place and the festivities are in full swing. A joyous chorus is silenced by the arrival of Raymond. He tells the horrified assembly that Lucy, her reason gone, has stabbed the bridegroom to death. A transfigured almost spectral Lucy appears still grasping the dagger with which she has killed Arthur. Now begins the celebrated "Mad Scene," *Ardon gl' incensi . . . splendon le sacri faci intorno!* introduced and accompanied by solo flute. The number is an exacting test for every coloratura soprano. While the vocal writing of this showpiece is extremely florid and exacting, it is not, in its general effect, entirely out of character with the dramatic situation.

In her delirium Lucy re-lives her meetings with Edgar and suffers again the terrible scene of his anger and reproaches in Act II. In her disordered mind it is to him, not Arthur, she has been united in the marriage ceremony that day. As the scene concludes Lucy falls lifeless to the ground.

For the brief finale we are transferred to a ruinous churchyard where the tombs of the Ravenswoods are discerned. Edgar, alone, tells in the aria *Tombe degli avi miei* that without Lucy life for him is vain and that he, "the last of his unhappy race," has come to this place where he will encounter Henry, his enemy, and find death in a duel with him. As a funeral bell tolls a group of mourners enters. From them he learns that the knell is for his beloved Lucy. Since Henry has already fled, Edgar resolves to end his own life himself. Despairingly he cries to the spirit of the dead girl in the final aria *Tu che a Dio spiegasti l'ali*. With a dagger he kills himself and so ends this tragedy of star-crossed lovers.

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LA SONNAMBULA

VINCENZO BELLINI, 1802 - 1835

The romantic operas of Vincenzo Bellini had an enormous popularity in the nineteenth century, the Golden Age of Italian Opera, when beauty of tone (*bel canto*) and distinction of style were more highly esteemed than dramatic expression. Bellini's melodies, brilliant and elegiac by turn—but always elegant—furnished abundant opportunities to the great florid singers of the past.

Felice Romani was the librettist for "La Sonnambula" as for most of Bellini's operas.

The first performance was at Milan in March, 1831. It is many years since the opera was heard in Dublin, but opera enthusiasts remember the performances of it at the 1954 Wexford Festival.

"Norma," probably Bellini's best known work, was performed by the Dublin Grand Opera Society during the 1955 Spring Season with Caterina Mancini and Ebe Stignani.

The setting is a remote village in the mountains of Switzerland in the early nineteenth century.

ACT I

In the village piazza the people are en fête to celebrate the betrothal of Elvino, a well-to-do young farmer, and the gentle Amina, foster-child of Teresa, proprietress of the mill. Only Lisa (soprano) is unhappy for she also is in love with Elvino and so she rejects the attentions being paid to her by Alessio (tenor), who is her ardent admirer. Hailed by a chorus in praise of her beauty (which serves to inflame Lisa's jealousy further), Amina (soprano) enters accompanied by Teresa (mezzo-soprano). In the gracious air *Come per me sereno* Amina expresses her gratitude to her friends and her own great happiness. Especially thanking Alessio, who has organised this fête in her honour, Amina wishes him and Lisa the same joy that has come to herself.

The notary arrives, soon followed by Elvino (tenor) himself. After the brief ceremony of betrothal Elvino places the ring on Amina's finger introducing with the words *Prendi: l'anel ti dono* a duet for soprano and tenor set in Bellini's characteristic long-flowing melodies. The sound of horses heralds the arrival of a stranger. Though unknown to the villagers he is, in fact, Count Rodolfo (bass), the son and heir of the lord of the manor, who has returned after a long absence. Evening is approaching and he decides to remain overnight at the inn rather than risk at that hour the precipitous mountain road ascending to his castle. In the

aria *Vi ravviso o luoghi ameni* Rodolfo recalls the days spent here in his youth. Passing from such nostalgic memories, he pays extravagant compliments to the beauty of the bride-to-be.

As night falls rapidly the people grow restive, explaining to the Count that their anxiety to be in their homes is because the spot is haunted by a phantom figure which lately has been appearing regularly at the hour of dusk. They describe this figure in the chorus *A fosco cielo*. Amused by this superstitious tale Rodolfo retires to the inn. When left alone with Amina, Elvino taxes her with a too ready response to the stranger's gallantries. Amina, however, soothes his jealous feelings and they bid each other a tender good-night in the duet beginning *Son geloso del zeffiro amante* — "I am jealous even of the breezes that caress your hair."

ACT II

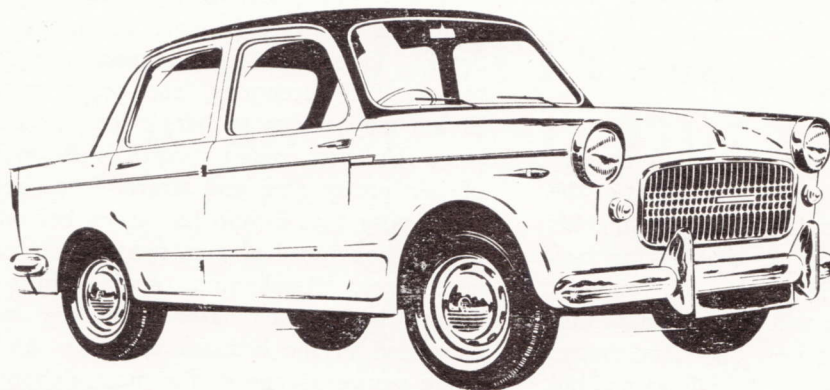
A room at the inn. Lisa conducts her guest to his room. She is in coquettish mood and tells him that the villagers have already recognised him and will shortly arrive to pay their feudal respects. Startled by a noise outside Lisa exits hastily, dropping her scarf as she goes. Through the window Amina enters dressed in her white night attire. She murmurs of Elvino in her dreams. Rodolfo realises at once that she is sleep-walking and guesses that this must be the phantom that has so frightened the village. Not wishing to awaken the girl, he resolves this embarrassing situation by withdrawing. When the villagers enter to greet their overlord, their surprise at finding Amina there turns to amusement. Lisa venomously runs off to fetch Elvino. Amina, awakening, is at a loss to explain to the raging Elvino the cruel situation in which she finds herself and piteously protests her innocence (*D'un pensiero e d'un accento*). During the long ensemble that ensues Teresa picks up the scarf Lisa had dropped and places it over Amina's shoulders. The scene ends with Elvino's repudiation of his bride.

ACT III

Scene I

A wood beside the village. A number of Amina's friends are on their way to the Castle. From their chorus, *Qui la selva è piu folta*, we learn that they are going to ask the Count to convince Elvino of Amina's innocence. They rehearse how they will

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TURANDOT

GIACOMO PUCCINI, 1858 - 1924

"Turandot", Puccini's last opera, was first produced at La Scala in April, 1926, eighteen months after the composer died in a Brussels clinic following a throat operation.

Anxious to find a new type of heroic subject and to explore new methods of musical treatment, Puccini considered many subjects before settling on Schiller's adaptation of "Turandot", a tale of fabled China, by the eighteenth century Venetian dramatist Carlo Gozzi. The librettists were Adami and Simoni.

Puccini worked on "Turandot" between 1920 and 1924—intermittently at first, then feverishly in the end as though the premonition of death were already upon him. From the start he envisaged a great final love duet as the supreme moment of the opera—something surpassing all he had yet written. When he died the vocal and instrumental scores were complete up to the death of Liù which occurs more than half-way through the last Act. The duet and the conclusion of the opera existed only in outline, but the composer Franco Alfano undertook the task of completing the work, using the copious notes Puccini had left behind.

After the scene of the death of Liù at the first performance, Toscanini laid down his baton turning to the audience with the words, "Here, signori, the Maestro died". A slow curtain descended and there the first performance was interrupted as an act of homage to the dead composer. At subsequent performances Alfano's concluding pages are universally used.

The score of "Turandot" is richer and more colourful harmonically than Puccini's previous works. New also is the importance assigned to the chorus and the magnificence of the music he wrote for it.

The scene of "Turandot" is Peking *al tempo delle favole*—in fabled times.

★ ★ ★

ACT I

The curtain rises on the ramparts and portion of the Imperial Palace of Peking where dwells the Princess Turandot, daughter of the Emperor of Japan.

It is night. A mandarin recalls to the people the imperial decree—"Turandot the Pure will wed whomsoever, being of royal blood, shall answer her three riddles. The head of him who attempts the test and fails shall fall beneath the executioner's axe. The young Prince of Persia has failed and will die when the moon rises." This Prince is the latest of the long line of princes who have come to woo the icy Turandot whose legendary beauty is famed in distant lands. All have been victims to her lust for vengeance (the reasons for which she herself will explain in Act II). As the crowd grows restive and excited at the prospect of another execution, an old man is knocked down in the mêlée and is in danger of being trampled underfoot. He is Timur (bass), the exiled King of Tartary, a fugitive in disguise, followed and tended only by the little slave-girl, Liù (soprano). He is rescued by a young man who, as chance would have it, is his own son, Calaf (tenor), also an exile and the Unknown Prince (*Il Principe Ignoto*) of the opera. A joyful reunion takes place between the father and the son he had believed dead. Liù has long and secretly loved Calaf. When asked by him why she had followed and remained with his father, her touching reply is "Because one day in the Palace you did smile on me, my Lord" (*Perchè un dì, nella Reggia, m'hai sorriso*).

Meanwhile, as the grisly preparations for the execution proceed the excitement of the crowds becomes feverish. But when the Prince of Persia actually appears they are suddenly moved to pity for his youth and beauty. Their cries to Turandot for mercy rise to a clamour which is stilled as the hieratic figure of the Princess appears for a brief moment at a loggia. Wordlessly she gives the sign to the headsman and withdraws from sight. Calaf is transfixed by her beauty. Then, like one possessed, he moves to strike the great gong which is the signal that he too will seek to win Turandot. The three Imperial Ministers, Ping (baritone), Pang and Pong (tenors)—fantastic *buffo* figures of *commedia dell'arte*—deride his infatuation and try to recall him to commonsense. Liù also supplicates him in the lovely aria *Signore, ascolta*. Calaf, unmoved replies to her appeal in the aria *Non piangere, Liù*, wherein he begs her to comfort his

father, Timur, should he fail in the trial. Then, eluding their grasp and, in a state of great exaltation, he strikes the gong that announces his candidature.

★ ★ ★

ACT II

The three Ministers cynically deplore the fallen state of China, corrupted by the blood lust of the tigress Turandot and her three riddles. From these reflections Ping turns to nostalgic repinings for his peaceful home beside the blue lake of Honan, Pong for his woods at Tsiang and Pang for his gardens at Kiù.

To the music of a superb march the scene changes to the courtyard of the Palace where the Court, the Ministers and the Mandarins, the Wise Men and the Priests, the guards and the people are assembled for the contest. Enthroned above all is the frail figure of the Emperor, the Son of Heaven. In an ancient quavering voice he tells of the oath he had rashly taken to humour Turandot's whim. He counsels Calaf to renounce, but in vain. In the silence that falls after the splendid choral salute to the Emperor the majestic figure of the Ice Princess appears for the first time in full view. Immobile, Turandot begins her long Narration. (This, lying so high in the voice, is about the most cruelly taxing of all soprano music.) Addressing Calaf she relates how "a thousand thousand years ago" China was ravaged by a foreign invader. Her ancestress the gentle Princess La-U-Ling "was by a man like you, O Stranger, dragged into the dreadful night of exile where she perished. Her spirit dwells now in me, and I shall avenge her on the stranger princes who come here from every land to woo me. None of them shall have me!" After an unheeded warning to Calaf not to attempt the impossible Turandot propounds her first riddle—"What is the phantom that dies each day and every night is born again?" He answers promptly—"Hope" (*La Speranza*). The Wise Men consult their scrolls; the answer is correct.

A little shaken, Turandot proceeds to the second riddle. The reply, again correct, comes after a little delay—"The Blood" (*Il Sangue*). The crowd applauds.

Turandot's composure crumbles. Advancing menacingly until she is face to face with Calaf, she puts the third and fateful question—"What is it that is ice and yet sets you on fire?" A long pause. Calaf seems defeated, but at last the answer comes. It is—"Turandot!" The crowd is jubilant, but not Turandot, who now attempts to cheat and implores her Imperial father to spare his proud daughter the

shame of being delivered like a slave to the stranger Prince. The Emperor, bound by his oath, rejects her plea. But Calaf chivalrously casts his victory at her feet. If Turandot before dawn can tell him his name, not only will he release her from their pact but he will die himself at dawn. As the crowds acclaim his chivalry the curtain falls.

★ ★ ★

ACT III

Night. Outside Turandot's apartments. The heralds are heard crying her latest decree, "None shall sleep this night and death to many shall be the penalty if the stranger's name is not discovered before the break of day". In the splendid *romanza* "*Nessun dorma*" Calaf rejoices that since none can know the mystery of his name tomorrow Turandot will be conquered. Turandot's decree spreads panic through the city. Ping, Pang and Pong vainly offer Calaf bribes—gold, gems, power, lovely maidens—if he will renounce Turandot and leave Peking. Timur and Liù are recognised as Calaf's companions of the day before. When Turandot demands the stranger's name from Timur, Liù boldly claims that the secret is known to her alone. At Turandot's order the girl is tortured, but to no effect. "I know his name," Liù exults, "and I keep it to myself alone." Fearful that her resolution may break as the torture passes endurance, Liù snatches a dagger from her guards and plunges it into her own breast. Turandot, amazed at the girl's strength, asks whence it came. "Through Love," Liù answers and, dying, warns her frigid tormentor that she will melt and love Calaf as she herself has done. (Aria: *Tu, che di gel sei cinta*.) Liù's corpse is borne away and the crowd disperses in superstitious fear.

(Here ends Puccini's work.)

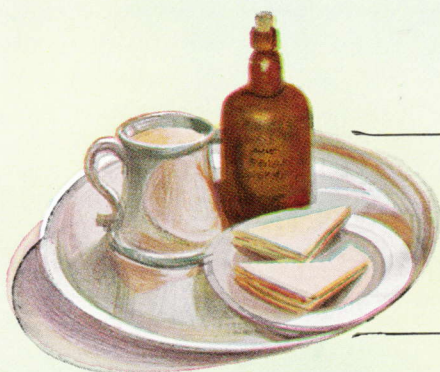
Turandot, visibly moved by Liù's sacrifice of her life for love alone, faces the Unknown Prince. The duet begins and as it unwinds the ice round Turandot's heart begins to melt until finally she surrenders to the ardour of his kisses. The glory of the Ice Princess is ended with her weeping in Calaf's arms. Just as the dawn is about to break Calaf tells his name. "Now I am in your power and you may destroy me if you will." For a moment it seems as though Turandot will repent of her weakness and accept his challenge. But no, Calaf has truly won her. As dawn breaks the scene changes, revealing again the Emperor and his Court. When Turandot addresses the Emperor, her rapturous words are, "August father! At last I know the Stranger's name and it is . . . Love!"



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Richard Barham, “ *The Ingoldsby Legends* ” (1842).



When “*Ingoldsby*” was written, Guinness was bottled in stoneware. The stone bottle illustrated was made by Stephen Green of Lambeth, some time before 1850.

The ingenuity — often the perverted ingenuity — of the Reverend Richard Barham's rhymes arouses the suspicion that it was for their sake that Guinness appears here. However, there is no doubt that by 1837, when the *Ingoldsby Legends* began to appear in “*Bentley's Miscellany*”, Guinness was being exported to many parts of the world and doubtless Spain was among them. Today Guinness is enjoyed, in perfect condition, all over the world by people who know what's good for them. And, as Violante and Iñes no doubt discovered, Guinness and a sandwich is almost a meal in itself.



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LA TRAVIATA

GIUSEPPE VERDI, 1813 - 1901

"La Traviata" forms with "Rigoletto" and "Il Trovatore" the trilogy of Verdi's great popular operas. All three were performed for the first time within the short space of two years.

Based on Dumas' "La Dame aux Camélias" which Verdi had seen played in Paris, "La Traviata" received its première on 6 March, 1853, in Venice. Despite the enormous and instant success of "Rigoletto" at the same theatre two years previously, "La Traviata" failed dismally at first to please the public. The causes of the failure were several. There were the inevitable first-night mishaps. Some of the singers were ill and the fourth Act spectacle of the soprano Salvini-Donatelli, one of the most corpulent sopranos of her time, enacting the part of a heroine who dies of consumption excited the mirth of the audience. Then, too, the subject of the life and death of a demi-mondaine rather shocked the susceptibilities of an opera audience of the day which had already received the unaccustomed jolt of an opera in contemporary dress.

It was not long, however, before the opera achieved its due recognition and it has remained one of the best (if not *the* best) beloved of all operas.

The libretto is by Piave. The events take place in Paris and are usually ascribed to the early nineteenth century.

ACT I

In the salon of the beautiful demi-mondaine, Violetta Valéry (soprano), a party is in progress. Among the guests is Alfred Germont (tenor). He is introduced to Violetta by Gaston (tenor) who explains to her that for a year and more the young man has been in love with her from a distance. Invited by Violetta to sing a drinking song, Alfred launches into the spirited *Libiamo nei lieti calici* in praise of the gay life. As the guests are about to go dancing in another room, Violetta is stricken by a sudden faintness and a spasm of coughing—a sinister premonition of the fatal disease that already ravages her. She quickly recovers, however. As soon as they are alone, Alfred tells her of his long-felt love. (*Un di felice, eterea.*) Violetta at first takes this declaration lightly and advises him that it were best to forget

her. Seemingly as an after-thought when Alfred is about to leave, she gives him one of her camélias with the promise that she will meet him again "when the flower has withered".

When all her guests have gone, Violetta's great *scena*, "*Ah, forse è lui*" begins. Strangely perturbed by her encounter with the young man, the brittle woman of the world wonders whether this might not be what she has never yet experienced—a serious love (*un serio amore*). With a bitter laugh she quickly dismisses these wistful thoughts as folly. Her chosen path of frivolous dissipation must now, she knows, be followed to its end. But as towards the close of the brilliant *cabaletta*, the voice of Alfred reaches her from below her balcony we know that her resolve is already weakening and that the two are destined to meet again.

ACT II

Violetta and Alfred have indeed met again and have been three months together in her secluded country house near Paris. In his aria *Dei miei bollenti spiriti* Alfred tells of their happiness in this rural haven of peace. Annina, Violetta's maid, enters. She is returning, Alfred learns, from Paris whither she had been sent to sell most of her mistress's remaining possessions in order to pay the considerable expenses of the establishment. Greatly shocked and humiliated by this unexpected information he declares he will go himself to Paris at once to raise some money. When Violetta has re-entered, a visitor is announced. It is Georges Germont (baritone), Alfred's father, come to rescue his son from, as he imagines, the toils of a mercenary female. From being nonplussed by the dignity with which Violetta meets his charge ("I am a woman, sir, and in my own house"), old Germont is further discomposed when she quickly convinces him, with proof in hand, that hers is the money, not Alfred's, which pays for all this "luxury" he has indicated. He begs here, however, to leave Alfred, pleading that while the family scandal of their association remains, the young man whom his daughter loves will not marry her. Violetta at first violently refuses the strange demand — she would rather die, killed by the disease with which she is

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stricken, than give up Alfred. This dialogue proceeds in the form of a duet of great pathos. Finally, convinced by Germont's reminder that as soon as her youth and beauty fade she will have no hold on Alfred ("What then?" he asks), Violetta consents. In return she asks only a blessing of the old man. Germont goes to wait in the garden for his son. As Violetta is writing a farewell letter to Alfred the latter enters in search of his father. Concealing her letter from Alfred's eyes, Violetta embraces him and in the great outburst *Amami, Alfredo, quant'io t'amo . . . Addio!* (the climax of the opera) she declares undying love for him. She runs distractedly from the room. A servant soon enters with Violetta's letter. As Alfred reads the shattering words, Germont père re-appears. Neither his comforting words nor his appeal (*Di Provenza!*) to the prodigal to return to his family can calm Alfred's frenzy. Believing that Violetta has left him to return to Paris and a former lover, the Baron Douphol, Alfred dashes off in pursuit of the runaway.

ACT III

Paris. The salon in the house of Flora (mezzo-soprano), a friend of Violetta's. The guests are entertained by a ballet featuring Spanish gypsies and matadors. All Violetta's old friends are there. News of her separation from Alfred has already reached Paris so that on the arrival of Alfred, who is soon followed by Violetta on the arm of Baron Douphol, the atmosphere becomes electric. Alfred sits down at a card table and, excited by his phenomenal winnings, keeps up a run of ironic comments designedly offensive to Violetta and the Baron. The latter reacts, joins the card game and loses to Alfred. As they rise to go to supper the Baron remarks that he will have his revenge after supper. Alfred's reply is a veiled challenge to a duel. Violetta, in great agitation, returns to the empty stage. She has sent for Alfred to warn him to beware of the Baron, a dangerous swordsman. Keeping her promise to his father, she maintains to him that she loves him no more and that the Baron is now her "protector". Enraged by this, Alfred loudly recalls all the guests. Pointing to Violetta, he proclaims the favours he received from her and with the brutal words *Qui testimon vi chiamo ch'ora pagato io l'ho* ("I call you all to witness that I've paid in full") he flings his winnings at her feet. Old Germont, a witness to the shameful episode, disowns the son who insults a woman thus. The Baron challenges Alfred to a duel and all the company express their reproaches in the choral ending to the Act.

ACT IV

The last Act is introduced by the beautiful orchestral prelude to which the curtain rises on Violetta's bedroom. She is sick and almost penniless, with only the faithful Annina to attend her. It is early morning and Carnival time. Dr. Grenvil visits the invalid who is not deceived by his comforting assurances of recovery. To Annina the Doctor confides that her mistress has but a few hours to live.

Left alone for a moment, Violetta re-reads a cherished letter from old Germont which tells her that after the duel, in which the Baron was wounded, Alfred had to fly the country; that he now understood the nature of Violetta's great sacrifice and was hastening back to her. "Too late!" she cries and in the very moving soliloquy *Addio del passato* she pictures her approaching end, lonely and forgotten, her beauty gone. Outside the sounds of Carnival in Paris are heard.

Alfred arrives. After their ecstatic greeting the lovers dream of beginning life anew far away from Paris (Duet: *Parigi, o cara, noi lasceremo*). In her new-found happiness Violetta for a moment imagines her health returning and desperately clutches at the possibility of living. But her brief candle of hope soon flickers down again. She rallies only to give Alfred her picture in miniature, in memory of happier times, before expiring in his arms.

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TOSCA

GIACOMO PUCCINI, 1858-1924

This melodrama of Puccini has been termed an operatic thriller. At any rate, its story has the strong flavour of the Italian *verismo* school. The lurid plot was drawn by the librettists Illica and Giacosa from the Sardou play which Bernhardt made famous.

The time is given precisely as June, 1800, and the characters have some relation to real life historical figures of the period. Italy was then divided. The French under Napoleon occupied the North while Rome, from which they had only recently been dislodged, was held for the Royal House of Naples and Sicily whose Queen, Maria Carolina, sister of Marie Antoinette, is named in the opera but does not appear.

"Tosca" received its first production in January, 1900, at the old Costanzi Theatre (now the Teatro dell' Opera), Rome. The setting of the opera is Rome itself.

★ ★ ★

ACT I

With three tremendous chords from the orchestra, representing the brutality of the character of Scarpia, who dominates the opera, the curtain rises on Bernini's Church of Sant. Andrea della Valle, Rome. The chapel of the Attavanti family is on the right. A dishevelled figure enters hastily. It is Cesare Angelotti (bass), an important prisoner of State, who has just contrived his escape from the prison of Castel Sant' Angelo. He searches for the key to the Attavanti chapel and finds it at the foot of a statue of the Madonna where it had been hidden for him by his sister, the Marchesa Attavanti. As he disappears inside the chapel the Sacristan (baritone), a comic figure, hobbles in. Mid-day strikes and as the Sacristan concludes his Angelus, Mario Cavaradossi (tenor), a painter and Tosca's lover, enters to resume work on his painting of the Madonna. It is a blonde Madonna whose colouring and features reproduce those of the Marchesa Attavanti whom the painter had observed while at her prayers in the chapel. Disregarding the mutterings of the Sacristan who is scandalised by the painter's irreverence, Cavaradossi

sings the aria *Recondita armonia* as he muses on the contrast between the fair subject of his painting and the dark beauty of his beloved Floria Tosca.

When the Sacristan has left Angelotti emerges and asks the help of his friend and political sympathiser, Cavaradossi. Just then the voice of Tosca herself is heard outside. As it grows more insistent, the painter hurries Angelotti back to his hiding place, pressing his own basket of food into the hungry fugitive's hand. When finally admitted Tosca is plainly ruffled by her lover's delay while the voices she has heard alert a suspicion that his companion may have been a lady—perhaps the Marchesa Attavanti whose features she recognises on the canvas. She makes quite a scene of jealousy and temper — Floria Tosca was not for nothing the great prima donna of her day — until mollified by Cavaradossi's endearments and the promise of an assignation at his villa that evening. (Duet — *Qual occhio al mondo*.) She leaves the Church and Angelotti re-emerges. Cavaradossi directs him to his villa outside Rome and to a dried-up well in its garden as a safe refuge should the place be searched. They exit hastily. The Sacristan enters, disappointed to find the painter gone and nobody to hear the great news — the (premature) report of Napoleon's defeat at Marengo — to celebrate which there is to be a *Te Deum* in the Church and a public holiday. Choristers and worshippers begin to assemble but all become visibly terrified by the sudden appearance (announced by the three great chords with which the opera opened) of Baron Scarpia (baritone), the dreaded Chief of the Roman police. He and his bailiffs have traced Angelotti to the Church. A search of the Attavanti Chapel yields a fan bearing the Attavanti crest and the painter's lunch basket. The Sacristan admits the latter to be Cavaradossi's and that, though the basket is empty now, the painter had said that he would eat nothing that day. Scarpia at once connects Cavaradossi with the prisoner's escape. When Tosca re-appears, Scarpia thinks by working on her jealousy to discover from her something of the painter's movements. With the evidence of the crested fan which he pretends to have found beside the painter's easel, Scarpia suggests to Tosca (already disconcerted by finding the

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painter gone and his work abandoned) that her lover has met the Marchesa Attavanti in the Church and has already taken her to the villa. This provokes a violent outburst from Tosca. As she leaves Scarpia orders that she be followed.

The high ritual of the *Te Deum* of Thanksgiving begins with tolling of bells and booming of cannon. A Cardinal officiates. Against the swelling music of the sacred words, the voice of Scarpia is heard in unholy counterpoint as he declares himself ready to renounce his hopes of heaven if he could send Cavaradossi to his death and have Tosca for himself.

★ ★ ★

ACT II

In the Farnese Palace in Rome Scarpia sups and muses with relish on his hoped-for conquest of Tosca whose voice reaches him from the Queen's apartments in the music of the Cantata celebrating the victory. Spoletta (tenor), a police agent, reports that a search of Cavaradossi's villa yielded no trace of Angelotti. The painter has, however, been held and Scarpia orders that he be brought in for questioning. Cavaradossi tells nothing. Tosca has also been summoned by Scarpia and arrives as her lover is sent for further interrogation under torture in an adjoining room. Unnerved by Scarpia's relentless pressure and by the agonised cries of her lover from the torture room, Tosca breaks down and betrays the secret of Angelotti's hide-out—*Nel poggio nel giardino* — "In the well in the garden." By telling Scarpia what he wants to know, she also incriminates her lover for assisting the prisoner's escape for which death is the penalty.

When the painter is brought in again—now limp and bleeding—he only upbraids Tosca for her betrayal and openly exults when Spoletta brings the news that Napoleon had triumphed and not been defeated at Marengo. His words seal his fate and he is dragged away.

Scarpia now resumes his game of cat-and-mouse with Tosca. Blandly he makes his offer—she can save her Cavaradossi by surrendering to himself. Tosca's despair and revulsion at the infamous proposal are expressed in the aria—possibly the most beautiful in modern Italian opera—*Vissi d'arte, vissi d'amore*. In this so called "Prayer" Tosca asks why she, who had lived only for love and for music and had harmed no living soul should be abandoned by Heaven to grief and shame like this.

Scarpia awaits her answer. Acquiescence is finally wrung from her as the executioner's drums are heard outside and Spoletta awaits Scarpia's orders for the

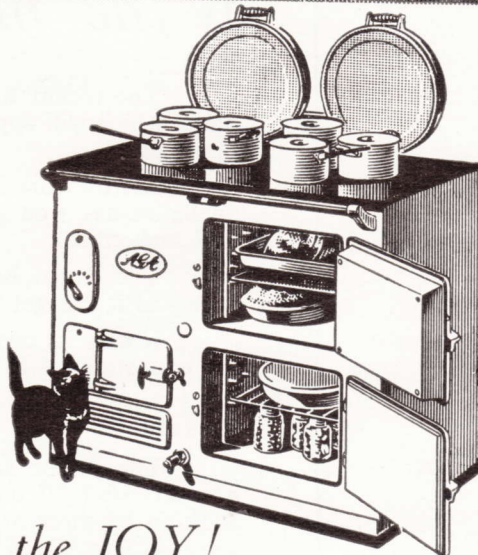
disposal of the painter. But Tosca makes a condition—she must have safe-conducts across the frontier for herself and Cavaradossi. Almost too readily Scarpia agrees and in her hearing instructs Spoletta that while the painter's execution must go through, it will be a "simulated" one—"as we did in the Palmieri case." While Scarpia writes the passports Tosca, leaning for support against the supper table, sees her opportunity. Grasping a knife from the table she is ready for Scarpia when he approaches her and plunges it into his heart. Pitilessly she watches his death struggles—"Die . . . and may thy soul be damned!" Only when at last he is still does she relent and cry: "Now could I forgive him." Prising the safe-conduct from the stiffening fingers, Tosca reflects wonderingly for a moment that before this man whom she has killed all Rome had trembled—*Davanti a lui tremava tutta Roma!*"

With a macabre touch of theatre—Floria Tosca was an actress—she carries two lighted candles from the supper table and places them beside the corpse and then a crucifix on his breast before silently stealing from the room.

★ ★ ★

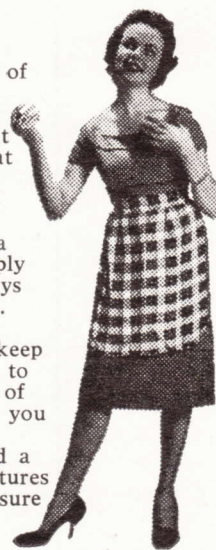
ACT III

Before daylight on the battlements of the Castel Sant' Angelo. The sound of sheep bells and the song of a shepherd boy are heard as he drives his flock to graze. The bells of Rome herald the dawn which will reveal the Eternal City and St. Peter's in the distance. Introduced by a long orchestral passage we now reach what is probably the most famous of all Puccini arias—"E lucevan le stelle"—as Cavaradossi awaiting his execution writes his farewell to Floria Tosca. As it ends Floria herself hurries joyfully in. There ensues an ecstatic duet beginning with her dramatic description of her killing of Scarpia and of how she has won freedom for both of them. He kisses the soft hands ("O dolci mani!") that she had stained with blood for him. Then hastily she coaches Cavaradossi in his rôle in the simulated execution that must take place. Fretfully she waits as the firing squad takes its position and the shots ring out. Cavaradossi falls. When the soldiers have marched away she gives the signal to rise. But there is no response. The bullets were real and Cavaradossi is dead. Scarpia has cheated to the last. Scarpia's murder has now been discovered and Spoletta and others rush in to take Tosca. Evading them she runs to the ramparts and with the words "O Scarpia, avanti a Dio!"—"Scarpia, we meet before God!"), Floria Tosca flings herself from the high parapet to death below.



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